

UKRAINIAN CITIZENS ABOUT THEIR ARMY



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In time of fundamental changes in a society and the transition from a totalitarian system to democratic one it is necessary to resolve specific problems that are not typical of developed democratic countries. Reforming of the Armed Forces of Ukraine is not an exclusion of them. The Ukrainian state has to conduct reforms in the army under the conditions of lack of funds, and sometimes even lack of vision how it should be done and what the purpose of the reform is.

The Armed Forces enjoy the highest level of citizens' confidence among other state institutions: in January, 2002, 28.8% of the polled "completely trusted" them and 36% — "inclined to trust". That is why the activity of the Armed Forces and their problems may influence society and cannot be out of the public's attention.

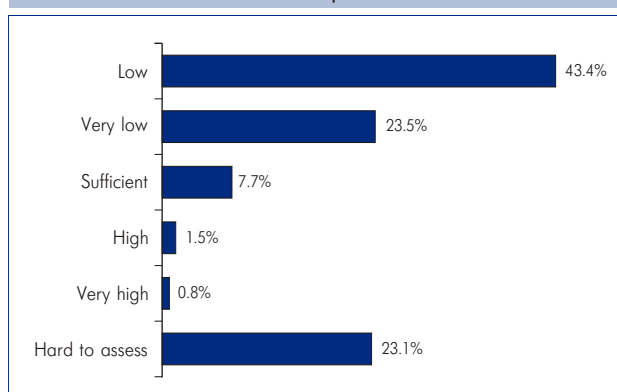
With the purpose of evaluating the attitude of the population to these problems Sociological Service of Razumkov Centre held a sociological survey in January between 8-16, 2002. 2019 respondents, aged 18 and above were polled in all Ukraine's regions. Some results are cited below.

Funding of defence needs

The overwhelming majority of citizens consider that the present level of budget expenditures on national defence is obviously insufficient (Diagram "How do you assess the present level of budget expenditures on national defence?"). 43.4% — assess it as "low" and 23.5% — "very low". Only 7.7% — think that it is sufficient. About 2% of respondents share the opinion that defence expenditures are more than they have to be: 1.5% — think that they are "high", and 0.8% — consider them as "very high".

It needs to be noted that in comparison with the previous survey (September, 2000) the public's assessment hasn't essentially changed: at that time 64.2% of the polled considered that defence expenditures were "insufficient"¹, and now 66.9% of respondent share the same opinion.

**How do you assess the present level
of budget expenditures on national defence?**
% of the polled

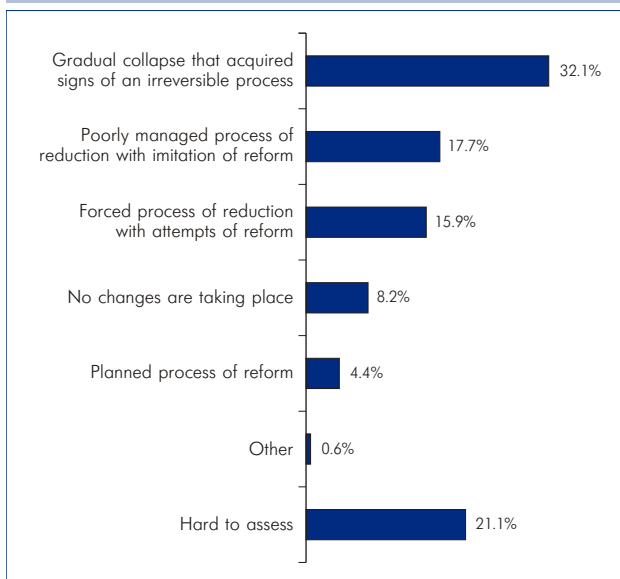


¹ Democratic Civilian Control over the Military in Ukraine: the Path from Form to Substance. — *National Security and Defence*, 2000, №11, p.36, <http://www.uceps.com.ua>.

Reform of the Armed Forces

In general, citizens have a negative assessment of changes that have been taking place in the Armed Forces through years of Ukraine's independence (Diagram "Which of the following assessments most accurately describes the changes in the Armed Forces in the period of independence?").

Which of the following assessments most accurately describes the changes in the Armed Forces in the period of independence?
% of the polled



One third of the polled (32.1%) estimate these changes as a gradual collapse that acquired signs of an irreversible process, other 17.7% — as a poorly managed process of reduction with imitation of reform. 15.9% of respondents consider that it's a forced process of reduction with attempts of reform, and 8.2% — think that no changes are taking place. Only 4.4% of the polled are convinced that there is a planned process of reform of the Armed Forces.

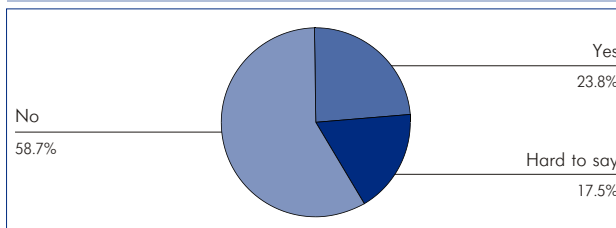
The negative attitude of the population to the changes that have been taking place in the Armed Forces is quite stable. In 2000, these changes were considered as a gradual collapse that acquired signs of an irreversible process by 29.8% of the population; a poorly managed process of reduction with imitation of reform — by 17.1%; and as a forced process of reduction with attempts of reform — by 17.6%².

Combativity of military formations

In view of the above-mentioned opinions the following situation doesn't seem to be surprising: the major part of citizens (58.7%) are sure that the Armed Forces and other military formations are not capable of

effective defence of the state's sovereignty against military threats; less than one fourth of respondents (23.8%) support the opposite point of view (Diagram "Are Ukraine's Armed Forces and other military formations capable of effective defence of the state's sovereignty against military threats?").

Are Ukraine's Armed Forces and other military formations capable of effective defence of the state's sovereignty against military threats?
% of the polled



It's been generally common to establish a fact that there is a great severance between the standard requirements of the Armed Forces of the present strength and present budget funding. The Head of the Verkhovna Rada Committee on National Security and Defence B.Andresiuck tactfully described this phenomenon: "The disbalance between requirements and capabilities is simply disastrous"³.

Citizens consider that the most common way to resolve this problem is, first of all, to reduce the Armed Forces strength with a simultaneous increase of their funding — 28.0% of the polled support this idea. 22.9% of respondents consider it expedient to raise funding of the Armed Forces of the present strength to the level of standard requirements (which is practically unreal), and 14.5% — to reduce the strength of the Armed

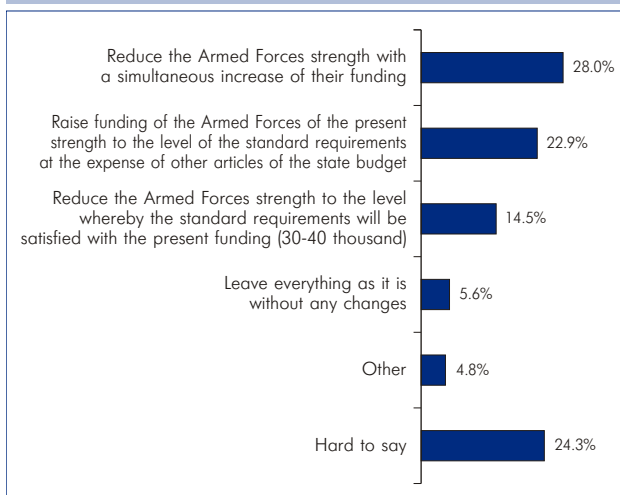


² Ibid, p.30.

³ Andresiuck B. Present State of Ukrainian Armed Forces, Their Financing and Reforming. — *Vijs'ko Ukrainy*, 2001, №11-12, p.7.

Forces to 30-40 thousand (for example, Georgia has such a number, and the same amount is planned for Bulgaria; the population of the countries are, correspondingly, 5 and 8 million people) whereby the standard requirements will be satisfied with the present funding. And only 5.6% of the polled offer to leave everything as it is without any changes (Diagram “How should the problem of the Armed Forces funding be resolved?”).

How should the problem of the Armed Forces funding be resolved?
% of the polled

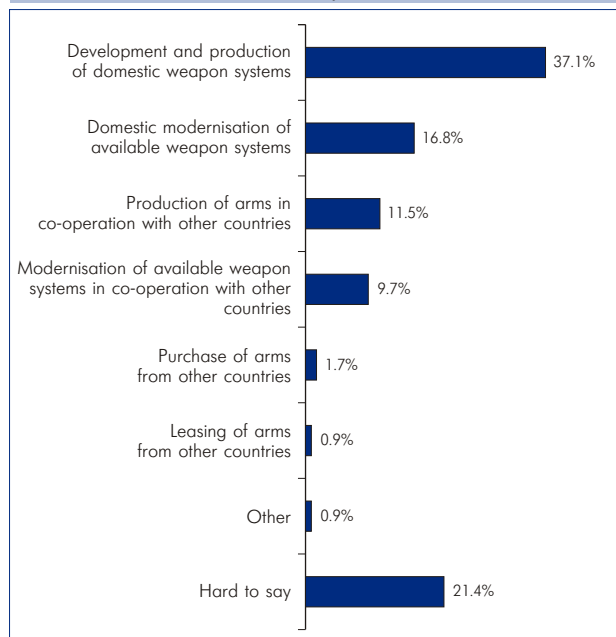


The Armed Forces maintenance

Not only the number of soldiers makes an army strong; in modern conditions it should have up-to-date armaments to be battle-worthy. The priority way of resolution of the problem of obsolescence and wear and tear of weapon systems in the next 10 years is in development and production of domestic weapon systems (37.1% of the polled), and in domestic modernisation of available weapon systems (16.8%). Substantially smaller numbers of citizens are inclined to rely on foreign partners in this sphere: 11.5% of the polled support the idea of production of arms in co-operation with other countries, 9.7% — stand for modernisation of available weapon systems in co-operation with other countries, 1.7% — for purchase of arms from other states, and 0.9% — for leasing of arms from other countries (Diagram “Which way of resolution of the problem of obsolescence and wear and tear of weapon systems is best suitable for Ukraine in the next 10 years?”).

It's obvious that common sense is the nature of Ukraine's citizens and they don't want to give money to other countries and, perhaps, don't want to make the military dependant on anyone. At the same time, one can assume that the priority of Ukraine's citizens is to take care of “domestic manufacturers”, which is

Which way of resolution of the problem of obsolescence and wear and tear of weapon systems is best suitable for Ukraine in the next 10 years?
% of the polled

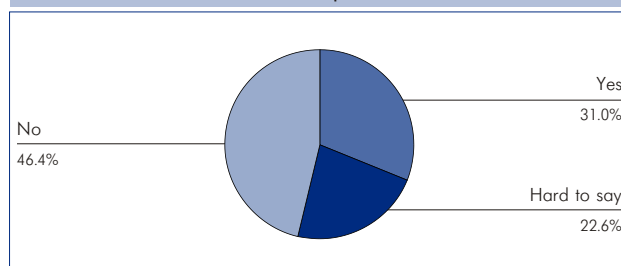


typical for high-developed countries, through the state order for armaments (namely, through the substantial funding for arms procurement in all cases where this approach could be effective).

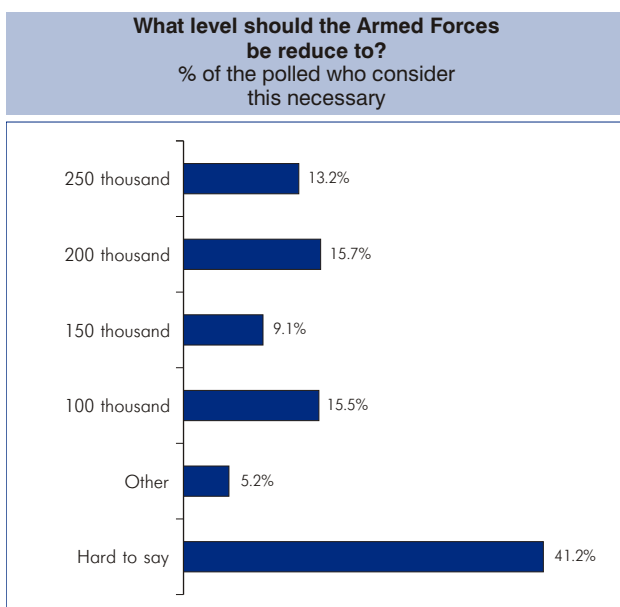
Reduction of the Armed Forces

The population of Ukraine has a very contradictory attitude concerning the radical reduction of the Armed Forces in the present military-political situation in the region and in the world. Neither the supporters of reduction nor their opponents have got predominant majority: nearly one third (31.0%) of the polled consider the radical reduction possible; 46.4% — as impossible; 22.6% of respondents could not answer the question (Diagram “Does the present military-political situation in the region and in the world allow radical reduction of the Armed Forces of Ukraine?”).

Does the present military-political situation in the region and in the world allow radical reduction of the Armed Forces of Ukraine?
% of the polled



But even among the respondents who admit the radical reduction of the Armed Forces, there is no clear distinctness concerning the level of reduction. 41.2% of reduction supporters could not give a concrete answer, and the remaining votes were divided more or less equally: among those who share the idea of radical reduction of the Armed Forces, 13.2% — believe they should be cut to 250 thousand; 15.7% — to 200 thousand; 9.1% — to 150 thousand; 15.5% — to 100 thousand; 5.2% of respondents mentioned another figures (Diagram “*What level should the Armed Forces be reduce to?*”).



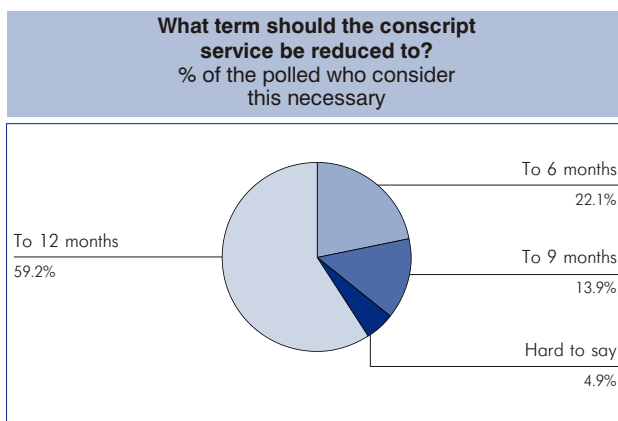
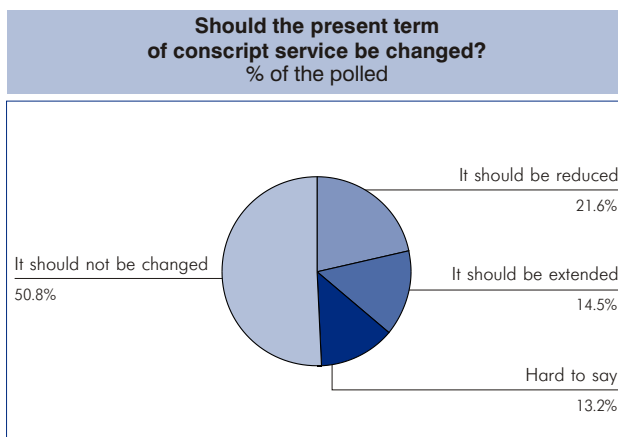
It is worthy to pay attention to the following fact. On the one hand, a bit less than one third of the polled consider it possible to radically reduce the Armed Forces, so the population worries about a possible decrease of the country’s defensive potential. On the other hand, two thirds of respondents think that the level of budget expenditure on defence is “low” or “very low”. It testifies that there is a feeling (maybe hidden) of serious crisis of the Armed Forces in public awareness and the understanding of necessity to make radical changes.

In this context one can understand the populations distrust to the capability and effectiveness of the Armed Forces to defend the state sovereignty against military treats, and rather sceptical attitude to the existent practice of reformation. Only 4.4% of the polled believe that there is a planned process of reform in the army. Such more or less calm common attitude to army problems can be rather explained by traditional civil inactivity of Ukrainians and traditional inaccessibility of military theme for common

discussion than by the people’s trust in ability of military leadership to resolve the problems properly and in the near future.

Reduction of the term of conscript service

An opinion of citizens on the popular topic regarding the term of conscript service is quite interesting. Public attitude to this issue is rather contradictory in spite of the fact that half of the respondents (50.8%) consider reduction of the conscript service as inexpedient. The reduction is supported by 21.6% of respondents, while the extension — by 14.5% (Diagram “*Should the present term of conscript service be changed?*”). The rest of respondents could not give a concrete answer. The majority of reduction supporters (59.2%) think that the term of conscript service has to be 12 months (Diagram “*What term should the conscript service be reduced to?*”).



The respondents’ opinion on the issue of changing the duration of conscript service depends on the region of their residence. The inhabitants of the Western region seem to be more inclined to reduce a term of conscript service — 28% of citizens support the



reduction, while only 11.7% — for an extension. At the same time, in the East equal parts support the idea of a reduction (16.9%) and an extension (16.4%) of the period of conscript service. In other regions the number of reduction supporters exceeds the number of people who support prolongation of the term of conscript service, but more than half think that there is no need to change it at all.

Also one can clearly trace the difference in people's attitude to this problem depending on the age of respondents — the elder the age category is the less inclined they are to a shorter term. So, one third of respondents (33.6%), aged 18-24, support the idea of reducing of the term, and among those aged 24-29 this part has come to one fourth (24.6%). And only 9.1% of the younger representatives and 11.8% of respondents, aged 25-29, think that it is necessary to extend this period. In the 30-39 age group 23.8% of people support a shortening policy and 20.2% of the polled, aged 40-49, have the same point of view. The amount of extension supporters in these age groups comes correspondingly to 14.4% and 15.0%. 19.5% of respondents, aged 50-59, think that the shortening of draftees' duration is expedient, while 18.2% — are inclined to prolong it.

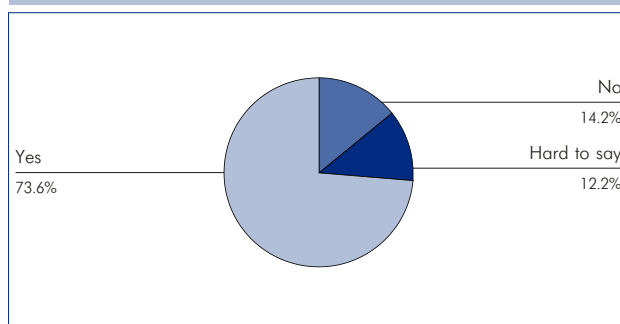
The only age group where the number of supporters of extension of the conscript service term (16.1%) exceeds the number of its opponents (14.1%) who support its reduction is the group of citizens, aged 60 and above. Perhaps, one can establish a presence of social conflict between those who had served three

years in the army in 1950-60s and their grandchildren who have to serve much less.

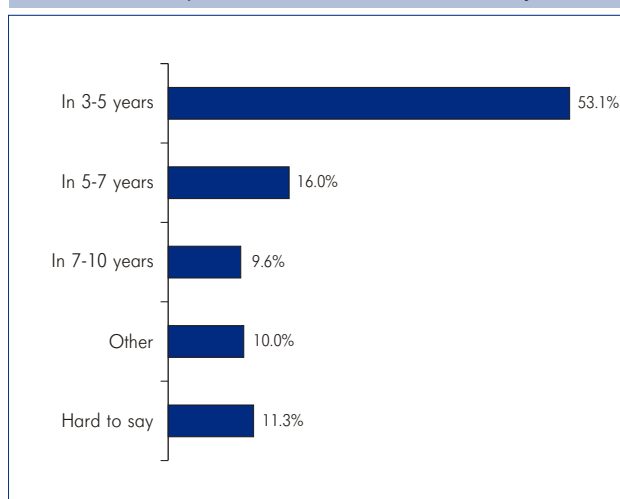
Professional army

Perhaps Ukraine's citizens have become tired with "amateurs" in the Armed Forces and would like to see professionals in the army. According to the poll results, one can uniquely state that our nationals like the idea of a switch to a professional army. This idea is supported by three fourths (73.6%) of the population and a number of opponents comes to only 14.2% (Diagram "Should the Armed Forces of Ukraine entirely transfer to a professional basis?"). More than a half of professional army supporters (53.1%) think that such change has to be done within a 3-5 year period; 16.0% — would give 5-7 years for this; 9.6% — 7-10 years; 10% — think that another term is more appropriate to this process (Diagram "When should the Armed Forces of Ukraine entirely transfer to a professional basis?").

Should the Armed Forces of Ukraine entirely transfer to a professional basis?
% of the polled



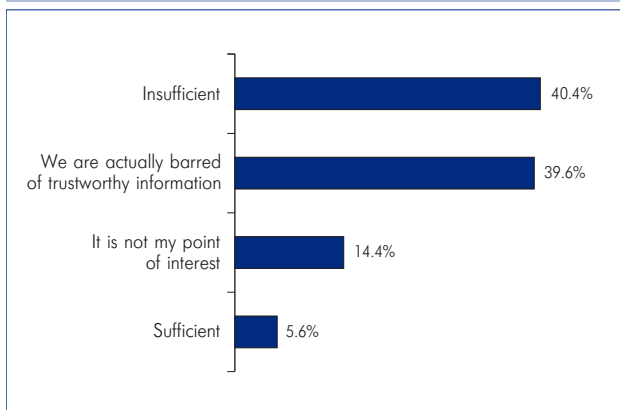
When should the Armed Forces of Ukraine entirely transfer to a professional basis?
% of the polled who considers this necessary



The possession of information about the situation in military formations

To a great extent the opinions of the population regarding the situation in the Armed Forces could be perceptible and intuitive. The poll's results have proved once again the low level of information citizens receive concerning the situation in the Armed Forces and other military formations. Only 5.6% — think that they are informed enough about the situation in the army; insufficiently informed — 40.4%, but 39.6% of the polled consider that they are actually barred of trustworthy information about the situation in the army. 14.4% of respondents declare that they are not interested in the situation at all (Diagram “How would you assess the level of your information about the situation in Ukraine’s Armed Forces and other military formations?”).

How would you assess the level of your information about the situation in Ukraine’s Armed Forces and other military formations?
% of the polled

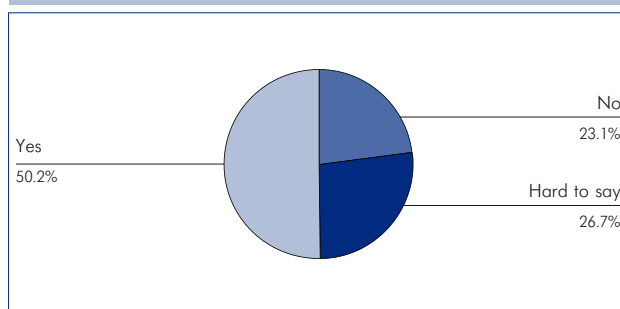


Nevertheless, Ukrainian tax-payers would like to receive information regarding what the budget funds allocated for needs of national security are spent on. In particular, the answer on questions that regard the information from the government on the issues of civilian and export control has shown that the majority of respondents would like to get information about these spheres.



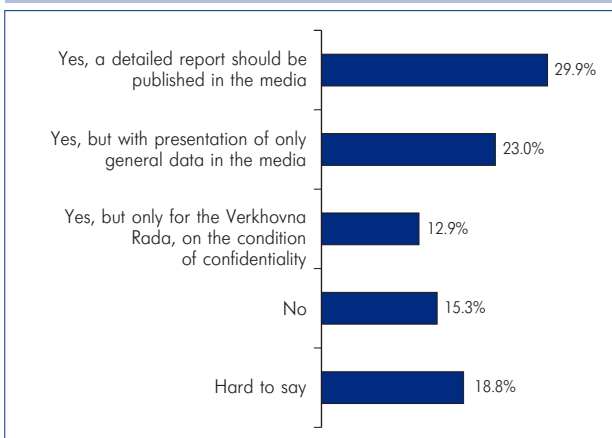
Citizens support the idea of strengthening one of the most important aspects of civilian control over the Armed Forces, which lies in transparency and accountability of Government activity: half of them (50.2%) consider that the Government of Ukraine has to publish the White Paper “Defence Policy of Ukraine”; the opposite opinion is shared by less than a quarter of the polled — 23.1% (Diagram “Should the Government of Ukraine publish the White Paper “Defence Policy of Ukraine?””).

Should the Government of Ukraine publish the White Paper “Defence Policy of Ukraine?”
% of the polled



Besides, 29.9% of respondents are sure of a necessity to publish a detailed annual report by the Government of Ukraine about arms exports, but 23% — think that only general data have to be presented in the media. And only 12.9% of respondents think that such kind of information has to be given only for the Verkhovna Rada on the condition of confidentiality, 15.3% — believe that such reports are not needed (Diagram “Should the Government of Ukraine annually publish a report about arms exports by the results of the year?”).

Should the Government of Ukraine annually publish a report about arms exports by the results of the year?
% of the polled



Conclusions

Based on the results of the survey, one can state that, in general, the population is not fully confident in the ability of the Armed Forces to defend Ukraine's sovereignty against military threats, but they consider it to be the army's trouble but not its fault since the funding of the army is not sufficient.

The population supports the idea of a switch to a professional army, but it has different opinions concerning the possibilities of its radical reduction. The attitude of citizens regarding a reduction of the conscript service is quite contradictory.

Nevertheless, one needs to assume the existence of "old times" stereotypes in society when the defence capability of the country, ability to provide protection for the state from outer threats are connected with the army strength. That is why Ukrainian citizens are not full of optimism as to its reduction and to shortening of the duration of conscript service.

Citizens consider that the best way to resolve the problem of the lack of funds is in reduction of the Armed Forces strength with a simultaneous increase of their funding at the expense of other budget articles. The issue of preventing of obsolescence and wear and tear of weapon systems the population gives preference to the production of new armaments or modernisation of existent ones by Ukrainian manufacturers.



There is rather big quantity of people who support the idea of increasing the budget expenditure on the Armed Forces, but are not ready to do this at their own costs. Military sphere is not a priority direction (the rating of politics in military sphere corresponds to 2.4%). So, one could probably foresee that the number of individuals wishing to perform such a patriotic deed would not be many.

Tax-payers want to know what their money is spent on. So, the strengthening of the democratic civilian control over the military and improvement of control over arms exports (export control) will meet public support.

Citizens of Ukraine realise that those who don't want to feed their own army will maintain another's. But to make the Ukrainian army really native it needs to be a bit more open for those whom it defends and protects.

One can observe a gradual increase in citizens' realisation that they are led up the garden path, so the number of people who negatively take the absence of notable results of military reforms is getting bigger. The authorities, on their part, need to understand that the matter is not the number of supporters and opponents. The matter is the lack of people's trust in the state authorities.

On average, nearly a quarter of respondents could not determine their attitude regarding the military policy. There are several reasons for that: the lack of information possession or the absence of trustworthy information, the absence of a feeling that there is a real threat of war, and unreceptiveness of the Armed Forces as a structure that could more or less influence the solution of priority social-economic problems.

On this account the state authorities (it concerns all branches of power) may have two options on how to react to the population's attitude to military problems: the first one is to take the low rating as a defect of resource provision and continue to do everything as it was before (with minimum efforts); or the second one is to realise and prove it to citizens that the Armed Forces in their current state could be transformed into a source of threat (ecological, economic, socio-political) to the society. At the same time, with the example of clear and easily understood plans and real actions state authorities may justify to people that radical changes in the Armed Forces are able to transform them into an economically viable and reliable instrument of defence for society against military threats. ■